Puget Sound / Georgia Basin
SMART GROWTH PRACTITIONERS FORUM
Port Townsend, Washington. February 5th-6th, 2001
Summary Report

As part of the Environment Canada (EC) / United States Environmental Protection Agency Joint Statement of Cooperation and in collaboration with Georgia Basin Ecosystem Initiative and Puget Sound Water Quality Action Team, a *Smart Growth Practitioners Forum* was held on February 5-6th in Port Townsend, Washington. The goal of the forum was to bring together a network of practitioners from many disciplines to develop a common thinking on how to advance the design and use of smart growth concepts, particularly as a way to protect watershed and ecosystem health in the Puget Sound and Georgia Basin.

At the forum, speakers presented and compiled smart growth principles, while practitioners identified key focus areas where significant progress in advancing smart growth principles in the Puget Sound / Georgia Basin is needed. Below is a summary of the principles and related suggestions for action. Hopefully, these will stimulate further discussion during the *Leadership and Innovation in Urban Sustainability Conference*.

SMART GROWTH PRINCIPLES

Best Available Science in Land Use Planning and Management Principles: The Washington State Growth Management Act provided a good example on how local governments integrate best available science information in the planning processes. The Act requires both a balancing and an integration of a broad scope of community values, including: maintaining natural resource industries, protecting the environment, ensuring public service, guiding urban growth, reducing sprawl, protecting property rights, and encouraging economic development.

Principles of Protecting Key Watershed Processes: Key watershed processes to consider are the delivery and routing of water, routing of sediments, nutrients and pollutants, heat, woody material, and habitat. Some of the principles include: minimize impervious surface, maintain over 60% of forest canopy, maintain natural functions of floodplains, wetlands and lakes, maintain riparian systems, avoid geologically unstable areas, and minimize stream crossings.

Smart Development / Low Impact Development (LID) Principles. The over-arching principle is summarized by lighter, greener, cheaper, smarter infrastructure. This is translated in land use strategies by achieving the lowest possible impervious surfaces per capita, using parks and public lands as point of intersection between streets and streams, integrating green infrastructure practices with other sustainable community design principles. Some of these principles were included in the examples of innovative residential developments, bio-retention areas, pervious pavements, and roof tops.

First Nations / Tribal and Traditional Knowledge Principles: The recognition and respect of First Nations and Tribal rights, oral and written languages, traditional territories and co-management responsibilities are all components essential to both the active participation of Native communities and the implementation of best planning practices.

Inter-governmental Collaboration Principles: Various levels of governments now need to collaborate and partner if they want to make better decisions affecting the land and resources in the Georgia Basin and Puget Sound ecosystems. This means finding alternative ways of doing business and moving forwards with a process that is inclusive, iterative, build trust, includes dispute resolution, and uses good science.

PRIORITY AREAS FOR FUTURE ACTION

With the guiding smart growth principles as a background, participants identified priority areas for future actions in advancing smart growth principles in the Puget Sound / Georgia Basin. The summary list below is directed at the various levels of government, local decision makers, practitioners, citizens, and non-governmental organizations that wish to advance the concepts of smart growth in their community.

Demonstration Projects

The need for more demonstration projects set within the ecological, political, and economic contexts of the Puget Sound / Georgia Basin was identified as a priority area for action. More information on how to apply the smart growth principles will help practitioners, elected officials, and community leaders promote the use of these practices in land development processes.

Suggested Actions:

⇒ Provide real life examples where smart growth principles were used.

⇒ Identify what are the economic implications of using these principles, particularly as they relate to public infrastructure costs.

⇒ Create an inventory of regional successes and failures in applying those principles.

Tools for decision makers

Toolkits on how to apply the smart growth principles are needed for decision makers. Toolkits are important for success of implementing the smart growth principles.

Suggested Actions:

⇒ Develop a "How to" kit on applying smart growth principles at the community level.

⇒ Develop and market a toolkit containing information such as Best Management Practices (BMPs), modeling tools, templates for demonstration projects, etc.

⇒ Tailor different tools for different types of development (e.g. a toolkit for suburban retrofit, semi-rural and rural smart growth principles).

Community and communication.

The value of using smart growth principles needs to become part of the community visioning processes. Smart growth principles help achieve and maintain community values.

Suggested Actions:

⇒ Highlight the successes and support local efforts that are already trying to apply smart growth principles.

⇒ Broaden the network of smart growth practitioners to also involve developers.

⇒ Use and link existing websites to better inform and provide smart growth information services.

Good science

A smart growth approach requires research and science information to show the fundamental relationships between land development decisions and consequences on the ecosystem.

Suggested Actions:

⇒ Coordinate scientific information and data at the various watershed scales of the basin.

⇒ Make the research and science information accessible to practitioners and decision makers.

In addition to the actions identified above, participants also identified the need for incentives, better integration of social, economic and environmental realities into smart growth decisions, and minimizing and sharing risk, as other important priorities.

Our hope is that the information provided above will serve as 'fodder' for discussion amongst conference delegates. The EPA and EC welcomes your valuable input as we continue to find better and more innovative ways in managing urban growth in the Puget Sound / Georgia Basin.

For more information, please contact:
Michael Rylko, (206) 553-4014
Marielou Verge (604) 713-9802